

IN A GARDEN

AND OTHER POEMS



H C BEECHING



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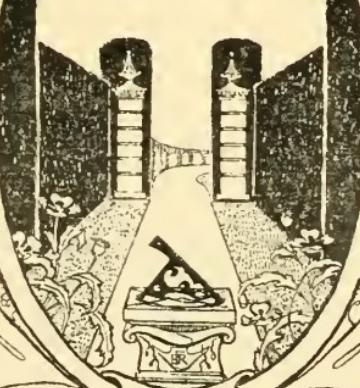
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IN A GARDEN

AND OTHER POEMS

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IN A GARDEN
AND OTHER POEMS



BY
H·C·BEECHING

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TO MY TOTEM

“Sub tegmine fagi.”

*Thy name of old was great :
What though sour critics teach
The beech by the Skaian gate
Was not, alas, a beech ;
That sweet Theocritus
The ilex loved, not thee ?—
These are made glorious
Through thy name, glorious tree.*

*Our singers love thee too.
In Chaucer's liquid verse
Are set thy praises due,
The ages but rehearse :
Though later poets bring
Their homage still, and I,
The least of those who sing,
Thy name would magnify.*

*For long ago my sires,
Ere Hengist crossed the sea
To map our English shires,
Gave up their heart to thee,*

DEDICATION

*And vowed if thou wouldest keep
Their lives from fire and foe,
Thou too shouldst never weep
The axe's deadly blow.*

*Thou hast my heart to-day :
Whether in June I sit
And watch the leaves at play,
The flickering shadows flit ;
Or whether when leaves fall
And red the autumn mould,
I pace the woodland hall
Thy stately trunks uphold.*

IN A GARDEN

I.

WHAT is the world trying to say ?
Why is the light so tender and grey—
Why are the tremulous leaves a-sway
On the trees new fledge with the faintest green ?
Nay, he were wise who could say what these things
mean,
and tell the secret of May.

What is my heart trying to say ?
Why does it tremble and hurry and stay
At the sight of a leaf on a sunny day,
Of a leaf tho' never so delicate-green ?
Nay, he were wise who could say what these things
mean,
and tell the secret of May.

II.

You came, the vernal equinox
Brought on the solstice in a day ;
Crocuses in their beds of box
Straight changed to tulips, striped and gay.

You went, and summer fled with you ;
'Twas autumn, nay 'twas winter here ;
Cold winds drove snow-clouds up the blue
And bared the disenchanted year.

Idly I mourn, or idly go
Thro' all the wan dishevelled place.
In hope some one red rose may blow
The harbinger of your sweet face.

III.

Green leaves panting for joy with the great wind
rushing through :
A burst of the sun from cloud and a sparkle on
valley and hill,
Gold on the corn, and red on the poppy, and on
the rill
Silver, and over all white clouds afloat in the blue.

Swallows that dart, a lark unseen, innumerable song
Chirruped and twittered, a lowing of cows in the
meadow grass,
Murmuring gnats, and bees that suck their honey
and pass :
God is alive, and at work in the world :—we did
it wrong.

Human eyes, and human hands, and a human face
Darkly beheld before in a vision, not understood :—
Do I at last begin to feel as I stand and gaze
Why God waited for this, then called the world
very good ?

IV.

Sick and sullen and sad the slow days go ;
Fog creeps over the land, and frost and snow
Grip on the springs of joy and stop their flow.

Yet at thy voice, beloved, the ice to-day
Felt the ardours of Spring, and fell away,
Bubbled again and sang with the joy of May.

V.

May-month is dawning,
 May-month so fair and fleet,
The white thorn blossoms
 Around my lady's bower ;
Golden the cowslips
 Are springing round her feet;
But ev'n the violet
 Is not so sweet a flower.

VI.

O faithless heart, for once, for once believe :
 Open thine eyes, can seeing then deceive ?

O hopeless thirst—for once, for once drink deep ;
 Look ! joy's full cup is given thee, tho' thou sleep.

O loveless life, break forth and bud ; thy rod
 Shall bear sweet almonds from the graft of God.

O stammering tongue, for once, for once speak true :
 To-day you plight the troth she giveth you.

VII.

Roses white and pink and red
 Who this dewy evening shed
 Round our path a faint perfume :—
 'Tis my love that thus you greet,
 Deigning sweets to one as sweet
 From your close-locked treasure-room.

Let not spikenard make pretence,
 Odorous gums that drug the sense,
 Balm or musk to vie with this :
 Not the spices for the Spouse
 Heaped in her Beloved's house,
 Cinnamon and ambergris.

Roses white and pink and red
Whose dim petals thickly spread
 Carpet o'er the shaven grass ;
Could you know—her feet are fair
And as soft as rose-leaves are,
 Kiss them lightly as they pass.

VIII.

He. What sound is that borne on the breeze,
From what heart-thrilling strain,
Out of the glowing depth of emerald trees,
Just heard, then lost again ?

She. It was the nightingale, whose fervent heart
Thus meditates his part
While his bride tarries ; or to guide
 er beauty to his side.

He. He is the true interpreter of love.
For who that listens to his lay
In covert hid from the unaccustomed sun
This warm spring day,
Knows if that passion be or glad or sad,
If pain or joy his numbers move ;
'Tis hope, nay 'tis despair, nay rapture mad,
Nay all of these in one.

She. Stretch hither then, dear bird, thy tawny wing ;
To our lone garden come and sing
In thy deep-throated way
The love we cannot say.

He. Yet come not at high noon,
Come when the silver moon
Lights up the chestnut tapers, and broad lamps
Of the white, spreaded rose ;
And makes the luminous pinks and lustrous
may
Fairer than ere by day ;
And the deep stillness grows
Deeper, the spell more deep ;
No sound save in the stall an ox that champs,
Or disturbed, scampering sheep.

IX.

“ *Dixit et avertens.* ”

When first I loved, 'twas not your eyes
That quenched ambition in despair :
Or eyelids folding petal-wise :
Or golden burnish in brown hair :
Or ebb and flow of red and white :
Tho' now I taste their full delight.

'Twas in this lovely garden first
I saw your loveliness displayed ;
You sat ; my heart was high, and durst
 Sit by you wondering, undismay'd ;
You rose : my heart fell on its face
And knew the Genius of the place.

So not by any common sign,
Ambrosial hair, or roseate hue,
That witnesses to race divine,
 Troy's prince his goddess mother knew ;
But when she turned her steps, " 'Tis thou,
Venus, I knew thee not till now."

X.

In the eaves a swallow cri'�,
And hark, the sound of whetting,
Whetting and whetting the scythe
 On the dewy lawn : O blithe,
Blithe sound, there's no forgetting.

For the grass is mown to-day ;
O delicate scent and sweet !
Sweeter than seeded hay,
 More sweet, and ah, more fleet !
It is blown, it is flown away.

XI.

In all my borders I my true love seek
By flowery signs to set :
Praising the rose-carnation for her cheek,
Her hair the violet ;

Flowers that with sweet returns each season bloom,
As each its impulse wakes,
Making air fragrant with a purple gloom,
Or whorl of crimson flakes.

And ye, who blanch your glow, violets more rare,
Carnations, foam of light ;
Be pledges of a beauty still more fair
When hair and cheek are white.

XII.

Dearest, these household cares remit .
And while the sky is blue to-day,
Here in this sunny shelter sit,
To list the blackbird's lay.

Is all so rare, romantic boy ?
Is love so new and strange, that thou
Must with that wild and shrilling joy
Thrill the yet wintry bough ?

Ah, now 'tis softer grown, more sweet,—
“I come, I come, O love, O my love,”—
And he is fluttering to her feet
In yonder purple grove.

Now hark ! all summer swells the note
And dreams of mellow ripeness make
So ripe, so rich his warbling throat
For spouse and children's sake.

Lover and prophet, see ! the flower
Of cherry is hardly white, and figs
Are leafless, and thy nuptial bower
A cage of rattling twigs.

Yet faith is evidence, and hope
Substance, and love sufficient fire ;
And Art in these finds ampler scope
Than in fulfilled desire.

So play thy Pan's pipe, happy Faun,
Till some May night with moonshine pale,
Thou pin'st, to hear by wood or lawn
Apollo's nightingale.

XIII.

Thro' the open windows come,
Thro' the heated summer air
Where the notes of birds are dumb,
Moanings of a deep despair.
And the listener, on the lawn
Digging plantains, holds his breath ;
For he knows the lists are drawn
In a strife 'twixt life and death.

Half his song the blackbird tries,
Stops again for utter drouth ;
So the sun thro' shadeless skies
Shoots his arrows from the south :
But that quiet moan comes yet,
Chokes the heart of one who hears
With vain longing, vain regret,
Till his soul throbs in his ears.

Slow the hours go creeping by,
Yet the weary moan is sore ;
Sudden then the wailing cry
Of a voice unknown before
Pierces thro' it. Oh delight !
Heart rejoice, tears have your way,
Praised be God in depth and height
For the child that's born to-day !

XIV.

With dreams the sunbeams steep
My bower that a bower will be
In a month, for March this year
Is kind as the month of maying :
And a sound of the sea brings sleep ;
Nay, sleep brings a sound of the sea,
For it is but the wind that I hear
In the heavy fir-tree swaying.

What hear you as you stand,
O love, by the shore of the sea ?
The surf, or the gull's sad cry,
Or the shouts of children playing ?
Nay, shouts from a far-off land,
And a plover's cry on the lea,
And the sough of the winds that sigh
In the heavy fir-tree swaying.

XV.

'Tis April, but the drought of March
Is not yet piercèd by sweet showers ;
The unsheathed sunbeams smite and parch
The springing grass, the o'erhasting flowers.

Our lily of the valley, see,
That hardly ripens for Mid-May,
My love's first pledge and annual fee,
Is blown a month before the day.

The lawn grows rusty, dusty red,
For tho' all night the gracious dew
Bathes each wan blade, that else were dead,
It cannot their dried sap renew.

But in the orchard is a place
Where we may lie, and feel the fall
Of apple-petals on our face,
And drowsing hear the cuckoo's call,

The ring-dove's melancholy note,
The blackbird's fluting, and the hum
Of bees above us, more remote,
As slumber steals our senses. Come.

XVI.

O happy garden, in May air
With lawns and wilding arbours fair
And alleys pleached of quick and yew
To cloister those from curious view
Who tread their paths of springing green ;
And, save of nesting birds unseen,

Listen and tell of love as they,
While youth is youth and May is May.

Take hands and walk, as we walk'd then
Through the long shade to sun again,
And watch'd the dial silently
Brood o'er his lighten'd hours (as we,
After our many days of cloud ;)
And heard the blackbird fluting loud
Fantastic descant from the beech,
Then speed him home with chattering screech.
We laughed, "Shy artist, who's thy foe ?"
Nor knew the dread that parents know.
From the nigh copse a turtle-dove
Pour'd forth his passionate tale of love
In smothered sobs from too full heart ;
We heard in trance our own love's smart.
Then all the breadth of heaven's high hall
Shook with the plaintive cuckoo's call,
Now faint, now resonantly clear,
Then faint again, as far or near
His homeless home he wander'd free,
A "Pilgrim of Eternity."

The spell broke with the smile, and so
We turn'd our steps and loiter'd slow

'Twixt borders pale with later spring ;—
Polyanthus crowding ring on ring,
Love's banner, heartsease, balm for thought,
White tulips, blue forget-me-not.
One slim narcissus drooped his head,
And from her closely curtain'd bed
One lily shook out half her bells ;
Each pluck'd ; which kept ? the rhyme not tells.

As yet the wise respective world
Had not her pomp of plumes unfurl'd
Or tassell'd gold on tree and tree,
T' enhance their fresh embroidery.
For Boreas bluster'd still, and th' East
Palsied the sap in plant and beast.

Only Pomona knew no fear
For her white breast had brush'd the pear,
And now her fingers 'gan to fling
On th' apples pink enamelling.
(O frosts, join not with rain to mar
More cunning workmanship than far
Ind fashions by her delicate waves
To deck the Nereids in dim caves !)

The season strain'd forward, and we
Strain'd forward ampler bliss to see—

Summer for spring, for blossom fruit ;
And we have tasted,—and shall do't,
If God allow, not once again—
Autumn's joy wrought from smiles and pain.
And now once more 'tis May—once more
June's breath stirs rapture, blown before
Her footsteps, and the rose's blood
Tingles, the ruby gems i' th' wood
Leap into twisted leaves, unfold
To spray, as one but cries “Behold !”
And in the spray's heart lurks—O June,
O heart of the year, thy heart makes swoon
Th' o'erquicken'd sense, but ev'n thy name
Wakes on man's heart new wings of flame !

O happy garden, two long years
Have all thy voices charm'd our ears
From discord, din, and rough unrest
That drive off peace, too timorous guest.
The ever-circling years shall bring
Thee but more beautiful a spring ;
(More beauteous spring, O love, to thee)
In spite of winter's jealousy !
Which of us twain shall sooner go
The separate path ; ah, who can know !
One May perhaps while thrushes call
On Love in sweet antiphonal,

An air shall blow, a whisper'd sigh ;
And one the other sitting by
Shall rise and quit this leafy place
With backward hands, and what still face !

Nay, tears avail not, but our love
Avails death's terror to remove.
Love dies not nor can lovers die ;
And though vast worlds between them lie,
Th' intelligencing current thrills
From each to each the thought love wills.
Remember'st not the dreary day
When I must journey, how (you say)
A nightingale, ev'n love's own bird,
In our fair garden else unheard,
Pour'd from the lilac, melting-sweet,
His throated jewels at your feet,
Till blissful night return'd me home ;
And is death more than absence ? Come
Leave care, 'tis May, and still we are here,
And shall be, shall be, many a year,
Harkening these swallows, and without
The struck ball, and the echoing shout
Of village children at their play,
In the quiet air at end of day.

XVII.

*"Here's a few flowres, but 'bout midnight more,
The herbs that have on them cold dew o' the night."*

Rose and lily, white and red,
From my garden garlanded,
These I brought and thought to grace
The perfection of thy face.

Other roses, pink and pale,
Lilies of another vale,
Thou hast bound around thy head
In the garden of the dead.

SONGS AND SONNETS

BARBARA

THE breeze of Spring is not so blithe,
The sea-gull not so free,
No silver fish so light and lithe
To wind in the green sea.
Nor e'er did subtle alchemist
Compound such wondrous dyes
Of sapphire sky and emerald mist
As the hue of Barbara's eyes.

The wind goes wavering thro' the grass,
The sea-gull circles high,
The golden sunbeams in a mass
Break from a rift of sky.
But I may bind the wind as well,
Or scale the gull's high nest,
As ever hope the gold to tell
That flows round Barbara's breast.

SONG

LOVE walked upon the sea this tranced night, I know,
For the waves beneath his feet ran pale with
silver light,
But he brought me no message as on a summer
night,
A golden summer night, long ago.

Love walked among the fields of yellow waving
corn,
For the poppy blossomed red where his weary
feet had pressed ;
And my door stood ready open for a long-expected
guest,
But he never, never came, night or morn.

Perhaps if I wait till the summer swallows flee,
He will wander down the valley and meet me as
before,
Or perhaps he will find me alone upon the shore
When he comes with the swallows over sea.

THE NIGHT WATCHES

COME, O come to me, voice or look, or spirit or
dream, but O come now ;
All these faces that crowd so thick are pale and
cold and dead—Come thou,
Scatter them back to the ivory gate and be alone
and rule the night.

Surely all worlds are nothing to Love for Love to
flash thro' the night and come ;
Hither and thither he flies at will, with thee he
dwelleth—there is his home.
Come, O Love, with a voice, a message ; haste, O
Love, on thy wings of light.

Love, I am calling thee, Love, I am calling : dost
thou not hear my crying, sweet ?
Does not the live air throb with the pain of my
beating heart, till thy heart beat ?—
Surely momently thou wilt be here, surely, O sweet
Love, momently.

No, my voice would be all too faint, when it reached
Love's ear, tho' the night is still,
Fainter ever and fainter grown o'er hill and valley
and valley and hill,
There where thou liest quietly sleeping, and Love
keeps watch as the dreams flit by.

Ah, my thought so subtle and swift, can it not fly
till it reach thy brain,
And whisper there some faint regret for a weary
watch and a distant pain ?—
Not too loud, to awake thy slumber ; not too tender,
to make thee weep ;

Just so much for thy head to turn on the pillow so,
and understand
Dimly, that a soft caress has come long leagues from
a weary land,
Turn and half remember and smile, and send a
kiss on the wings of sleep.

ACCIDIA

THERE breathes a sense of Spring in the boon air :
The woods are amber, purple, misty red,
Primrose and violet rouse them from their bed,
Their skiey homes the patient rooks repair ;
Everywhere hope is rife, joy everywhere ;
But I thy heart lie yet unquickenèd,
And bleating lambs and larks that sing o'erhead
Charm not away my sluggish cold despair.

Peace, peace, fond heart ; thy spring-tide is not this ;
Thy sap of joy mounted, though flowers were sere,
That day, though leaves fell thick before the West.
Nor grudge nor envy thou a natural bliss.
Birds keep their season, thou through all the year
May'st sing thy song, soar skyward, make thy nest.

IMPRISONED

THE last half-hour is come and past,

The last good-bye is said,

The outer door is shut, the last

Faint echo fallen dead.

My heart too is shut fast, shut fast,

Close barred with bars of lead.

None may come in, none may go out ;

I sit apart alone ;

Long days I sit, silent, in doubt

If the heart be turned to stone ;

Long months—and then one day, a shout ;—

At once the walls fall down.

LOVE UNRETURNED

My soul, where is the fruit of life-long pain
To render to the husbandmen above ?
Thou hast been watered by my tears of love
For that pure spirit whose serene disdain
Pierced like a ploughshare thro' thee, leaving plain
Forgotten depths wind-sown, whereout I strove
Unceasingly to gather what might prove,
In time of harvest, tares instead of grain.

“Alas !” my soul said, “had but Love passed by
And cast into the furrows, as he went
Sowing beside all waters in the spring,
Methinks I had borne fruit abundantly
For God to garner, as He sits intent
Above the angels at their winnowing.”

BEAUTY

THESE other things of earth and sky
Are still most beautiful, and yet
I still can love them quietly.

That broad flush where the sun has set
Lingering awhile for the moon's sake,
And the grey sea, I shall forget.

Why will forgetfulness not take
The troubled longing from my heart
Which thy flushed face and grey eyes make

Art thou, thou only, more than part
Of this great beauty of the whole,
That but for thee my quick nerves start ?

Hast thou some hidden magic of soul
Which draws my eyes and hands and feet
As the moon draws the waves that roll ?

It may be, for I know well, sweet,
I have no word to say at best,
But the wave's word which the winds repeat.

(Moon, is this spell thy potentest ?
Cannot the waves mount up to heaven,
Or else this tossing sink to rest ?)

Conjure no more ; let me be given
To love thy beauty peacefully
Like sunshine or the silver Seven.

HOPE

I SHALL not see him yet, I know, for still
Between us lies an unsurmounted hill,
 And tho' I hurry and pant, his pace is slow ;
Yet shall I see his sunny face and hair
(For he will surely come to meet me) there
 In the last valley somewhere, that I know.

What tho' he pauses in the pleasant wheat
To watch the lark mount skyward, do my feet
 Pause or my eyes desert the path they climb ?
What tho' he strays where pleasant voices call
Of thrush or dove or woodland waterfall ?
 My ears hear nothing till that meeting-time.

Will my strength last me ?—did not someone say
The way was ever easier all the way,
 The road less rough, the barren waste less bare ?
The briars are long since past, the stones cut less,
This hill is not so steep, let me but press
 Across that peak, I know he will be there.

HEART AND WIT

It is not for infinity,
For larger air, and broader sea,
I long, but for one child, ah me !

Desolate in my room I sit,
And my heart, questioned by my wit,
Makes poor attempts to answer it.

A mere child. Yes, a child whose face
Is all I care for, to express
Colour and form, and time and space.

Who prattles nonsense. Ay, may be,
But woven throughout with subtlety,
Far, far too deep and high for me.

While you say nothing. For my speech
Would break the spell that the weird witch
Has finely wrought from each to each.

Can it be love? Poor feeble word !
Confounding each emotion stirred
By God or man or tree or bird.

What is it ? Nay, I know not, good ;
For I would learn it, if I could,
This mystery of flesh and blood.

But this I know, that sun and star
Are less to me and far less far
Than certain lights and shadows are.

LOVE THE MASKER

(Anacreontic)

I.

ON a summer day,
Under leaves for sky,
Stretched at ease we lay.

When the heat gan die,
When the light grew mild,
Came there wandering by,

O, a lovely child,
Fair as the Winged Boy,
Came and looked and smiled.

“Stay, here’s many a toy,
Child, whoe’er you be.”
Said he, “I am Joy.”

So he stayed, and we
Crowned his hair with buds,
Bent and bowed the knee,

Brought him Summer's goods
Made him king for play
In the leafy woods.

“Now, child, home away,
We have kept you long.”
But the child would stay.

“Sing then one last song,
Sing and go,” we said,
“Night may do you wrong.”

Then we kissed the red
Darling lips, and he
Homeward wandered.

II.

On a winter's night
When the storm was o'er
And the snow lay white,

I unlatched the door,
Drawn to watch the moon
Shining keen and frore.

There upon the stone
Crouched a child, behold !
Sleeping or in swoon.

Ah, his face was cold,
Pinched and wan and thin
'Neath his hair of gold.

"Chafing heat may win ;
Quick, or the child dies."
So we chafed his skin ;

Till with many sighs
Th' eyelids opened,
Then we saw his eyes.

"O, sweet Joy," we said,
"O our summer king,
Thou wert all but dead.

Say what luckless thing
Drove thee thro' the snow,
Hither wandering ?"

"Nay, my name is Woe,"
Said the child, "nor where
Am I, do I know,

Nor who pay me care :
But I must away,
On my journey fare."

“ Nay, our darling, nay,
Whatso thy name be,
Hither didst thou stray ;

We have longed for thee,
We have found and saved ;
Ours thou art, agree.”

But his gold locks waved
As he shook his head,
Laughed, and echoed “ saved ” !

Then his wings light-spread
Beat, and he was gone,
And we worshipped.

LOVE AND DUTY

O BLUE eyes, bright with sapphire blaze,
Dear mantling cheek, a ruby fire,
My eyes, 'tis, light the light I praise,
Your cheek on mine that flushes higher.

Ah, could these fires their force sustain,
Each draw from each and find no loss—
Nay, waxing as the pulses wane
Reforge the heart and purge its dross !

Think it not ; all things slide away ;
Nor can love's light and heat abide,
Tho' eyes on eyes be fixed alway,
And cheek be ever cheek beside.

Yet if that star, of many one,
Which blazes stedfast o'er our head,
Lead up our eyes, as each day's done,
And thro' our eyes its influence shed,

Till thro' our hearts there flows with peace
Of equal pulse the same desire,—
Then eyes and cheeks shall never cease
To glow and feed each other's fire.

POLONAISE

(*Chopin, Op. 40, 2*)

So long, so long, the solitary night :
But day will break and bring the happy light,
 And then I shall arise and see the sun.
Nay, for the night has fallen eternally,
The shadow of death is heavy over me,
 There is no rising up for such a one.

No gay glad day, no quiet twilight hour,
No mist of morning or sweet noon-day shower,
 No twitter of birds or murmur of labouring
 men ;
Only the wizard mockery of the moon,
The wind repeating the same weary tune,
 The dreams that light a little, and fly again.

LOCA SENTA SITU

THE rushes stand where the rushes stood,
Stiff and tall, but the lake is dry ;
They will stand so still in the lonely wood,
Till the world shall die.

No wind makes rustle the weary reeds ;
The gentle gale and the rushing blast
As they follow where spring or the storm-king
leads,
Pause aghast.

The red sun flames with a steady light,
No smallest cloud in the brazen skies ;
The moon looks down with a pale affright
In her quiet eyes.

No song of bird can now come near,
No buzz of insect ever again,
No ripple of pleasant water, or tear
Of the dripping rain.

The reeds stand now where the reeds then stood,
Above them hangs the silent sky ;
Around them shivers the lonely wood,
And the lake is dry.

ROSE-FRUIT

THEY praised me when they found the new-born bud,

And all my blood
Flamed, as I burst in blossom, to requite
Their dear delight.

And still they praised my beauty, as I grew
In the sun's view ;
Then what will be their joy, said I, to find
My fruit behind !

But when the wind came, and revealed at last
My heart set fast,
They said, " 'Twere well this cumbering thing
should go ;
New buds will blow."

SONG

Is this the spring that wanders
With sad and wistful eyes,
And idly only ponders
The grey and vacant skies ?
Is this true spring or seeming
That sits with sunken head ?
O yes, for she is dreaming
Of winter that is dead.

Is this the spring that quickens
The violets in the vale,
And all the woodland thickens
With primrose-blossoms pale ?
Is this true spring or seeming
That smiles along the way ?
O yes, for she is dreaming
Of laughter of the May.

NATURE'S CARAVANSERAI

TAKE down the tapestries we hung for Summer,
And spread them for a carpet on the floor ;
'Tis faded, but 'twill serve for the new-comer.
The Queen may come again ? Fresh are in store.

WHISPERS AT COURT

October

- I. COME away, away,
Summer at length is sped.
Was ever a King so gay ?
And now he lieth dead.
Kiss we his brother's hand,
Who reigns in the Southern'land.
- II. Stay and see, and see ;
Summer was glorious,
But gorgeous pageantry
Doth little profit us.
His Queen (if truth be told)
Will scatter abroad his gold.

November

- I. Come now, O come,
Autumn her gold hath spent ;
And through the palace doth roam
Moaning her discontent.
Her voice is shrill and drear,
A weariness to hear.

- II. Stay yet, O stay,
Winter will reign to-night.
Did you not mark to-day
His bitter smile in her sight?
He hath a plot, I ween,
To carry captive the Queen.

AVE ATQUE VALE

THE beech has fallen in the gale,
The gentle beech we loved so long.
Alas, could wintry winds avail
To work such envious wrong !

No more shall April make thee brave
With silken leaves, nor e'er again
Thy streaming tresses toss and wave
Flashing their gems of rain ;

While haply sheltering boy or maid
Looks startled up, and deems he sees
The green, pale light thro' roofs of jade
In fairy palaces.

No more shall mavis to his mate
Warble, or gossip, sparrows cheep
In thy loved bowers, or jackdaws prate
On caucus matters deep ;

Or sweet May's bird his mystery ply
Cutting smooth jewels of ringing song,
To grace with trembling ecstasy
Night's ear, that waited long.

Who planted thee, I know ; and praise
His ghost, and here within my hall
(That once was his,) have set his face,
For a memorial ;—

A stately priest with powdered hair,
In cassock trim and decent bands ;
My fancy sees him fix thee there
With tender, fostering hands.

Goodbye ; low lying at my feet
I hail, I wail thee as my sire,
And with due rites and dirges meet
Will light thy funeral pyre.

FIRST SNOW

THE fallows yellow and frigid
'Mongst frozen snow-fields lie :
The black trees lift up rigid
Their arms to the leaden sky.

O'er barns and haystacks whitened
The larches sigh and sway ;
The hedgerow grasses are lightened
With light not of the day.

And sheep on the south slope browsing
Close huddled for the cold,
In a silvery mist drowsing,
Have all their fleece of gold.

But I know tho' round and above her
Are spells of the wizard Death,
That waiting the Spring, her lover,
Summer but slumbereth.

And I would my heart were lying,
Where Summer lies asleep,
Lulled by the fir-trees sighing,
And tinkling bells of sheep.

THE ROBIN IN JANUARY

(“*Hey robin, jolly robin*”)

GREEN again, O green to-day
Garden lawn, and mossy park ;
They have laid awhile away
Winter’s ermine cloak ; and hark,
Hark, our robin, who but he ?
Singing blithe as blithe can be.

’Tis not passion’s melting note,
Though his breast be red like fire ;
Nor can his, like thrush’s throat,
Raise to rapture each desire :
’Tis a song of simplest joy,
Like the laughter of a boy.

Robin, keep thy happy heart,
Through the year so well begun :
Live and love, unheard, apart,
So may we when Summer’s done,
Tired with art and passion-spent,
Hear and share thy sweet content.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE IN SEPTEMBER

(Villanelle)

CHILD of the muses and the moon,
O nightingale, return and sing,
Thy song is over all too soon.

Let not night's quire yield place to noon,
To this red breast thy tawny wing,
Child of the muses and the moon.

Sing us once more the old sad tune
Pandion heard whien he was king,
Thy song is over all too soon.

Night after night thro' leafy June
The stars were hush'd and listening,
Child of the muses and the moon.

Now new moons grow to plenilune
And wane, but no new music bring,
Thy song is over all too soon.

Ah, thou art weary ! well, sleep on,
Sleep till the sun brings back the Spring ;
Thy song is over all too soon,
Child of the muses and the moon.

NIDDERDALE

Two things I love in this most lovely dale :
A stream of amber water, clear and chill,
O'er slope stones slipping, or at wayward will
Breaking smooth silence to a silver tale ;
A fir-wood then, fanned by a gentle gale
To loose its scent ; within the trunks are still,
And pillar a dark shrine for dreams to fill ;
Between the stems the unsunned grass is pale.

Two things I loved ; but thou, O lovelier
Than these, hast all that these were worth to me ;
Thy clearer eyes know more of change and stir
Than all the brooks, thy tongue more melody ;
And 'neath thy shadowy hair, thy serene face
Makes sanctuary in the holy place.

TO COMATAS

*τὸν δ' ὑπὸ δρυσὶν ἢ ὑπὸ πεύκαις
ἀδὲ μελισδόμενος κατακέκλισο, θεῖε Κομάτα.*

HERE on this garden's close-cut grass,
 Where here and there a leaf astray
 Lies yellow, till the wind shall pass
 And take it some new earthy way,
 Here, O Comatas, let us lie
 While yet the autumn sun is high.

The stir of men is quiet now,
 But birds are singing each to each ;
 The robin on the apple bough
 Sings to the robin in the beech ;
 And swallows twitter as they go
 Wheeling and sweeping high and low.

No sound but these sweet madrigals
 To our enclosed garden comes,
 Save when a ripened apple falls,
 Or gnats intone, or a wasp hums.
 Here shall thy voice bid time speed by,
 O boy Comatas, as we lie.

Sing some old rhyme of long ago,
 Of lady-love or wandering knight,
Of faithful friend and valorous foe
 And right not yet estranged from might ;
The songs our singers sing us now,
O boy Comatas, sing not thou.

Sing, for thy voice has gentle power
 To cancel years of fret and woe,
And I remembering this one hour,
 Shall pass sad days the happier so ;
And thou before the sun has set,
O boy Comatas, wilt forget.

GOING DOWN HILL ON A BICYCLE

A Boy's Song

WITH lifted feet, hands still,
I am poised, and down the hill
Dart, with heedful mind ;
The air goes by in a wind.

Swifter and yet more swift,
Till the heart, with a mighty lift,
Makes the lungs laugh, the throat cry :—
“O bird, see ; see, bird, I fly.

Is this, is this your joy,
O bird, then I, though a boy,
For a golden moment share
Your feathery life in air !”

Say, heart, is there aught like this
In a world that is full of bliss ?
‘Tis more than skating, bound
Steel-shod to the level ground.

Speed slackens now, I float
Awhile in my airy boat ;
Till when the wheels scarce crawl,
My feet to the treadles fall.

Alas, that the longest hill
Must end in a vale ; but still,
Who climbs with toil, wheresoe'er,
Shall find wings waiting there.

NATURAL HERALDRY

THE rain is over, that so long
Has chilled the tender-hearted May ;
Chaffinch and thrush resume their song :
Come, children, come : come out to play ;
Leave crests and shields, and con with me
A still more antique heraldry.

See, in a field of azure sky,
Whose tincture glows without a stain,
Mid argent clouds dispersedly
The sun in splendour shines again ;
While of them both¹ the fountains flow
In barry-wavy streams below.

Here on a mount are fir and beech,
And counterchanged by every breeze
Leaves of all foils ; and flowers each
Proper, in chief the fleur-de-lis ;
And look where barbed and seeded blows
Argent and gules the rival rose.

¹ *i.e.*, of argent and azure.

Two-headed eagles are not here,
Or crested peacocks in their pride,
But two-legged martlets build, and steer
With wings displayed their circles wide ;
And emulate with grub and fly
Your pelican in her piety.

In this field vert, parted per pale,
No lion ramps or gryphon prances
But Dobbin whisks a coupèd tail,
And Meg as salient as a lance is ;
And what supporter could surpass
Lucius, our sturdy golden ass ?

SOME FLOWERS

Poets sing you fancies
About Love and Death,
Night and Day.
Do not give them pansies ;
“That’s for thoughts,” one saith :
Give them bay.

If the soldier’s quarrel
Be for right, not might,
God and King,
Let them bind the laurel
Round his brows at night,
Glorying.

For the lover roses,
Roses for his love,
Till they die ;
When the churchyard closes
O’er them, strew above
Rosemary.

For the parson rueful,
Herb of grace, not sense,
Here is rue ;
Let the sleepy pewful,
With a difference,
Wear it too.

TRIOLET

UNDER the sun
There's nothing new ;
Poem or pun,
Under the sun,
Said Solomon,
And he said true,
Under the sun
There's nothing new.

RELIGIOUS PIECES

THE TREE OF LIFE

A RECOGNITION IN FOUR SEASONS

Argument

A prophet, desiring to recover for men the fruit of the Tree of Life, seems to find Paradise by certain traditional signs of beauty in nature. He is further persuaded by observing the beauty and innocence of children. By and by he comes upon the Tree of Knowledge, whose fruit, now old, he discerns to be evil; but from which, to his desire, new is brought forth, which is good. At each recognition one of the Guardian Angels of the Tree of Life is withdrawn, until there is left only the Angel of Death, in the light of whose sword he perceives it. The Angels' songs are not heard by the prophet.

I. SPRING

** Prophet*

O TREE of life, blissful tree,
Old as the world, still springing green,
Planted, watered by God ; whose fruit
Hath year by year fallen about the root,
And century by century ;
Grant me that I thy glory unseen
At last attain to see !

Chorus of Angels

*The flame of our eyes still hideth
 The fatal tree :
 Which God in charge confideth
 That none may see,
 Till 'gainst our light advances
 A purer ray,
 And melts with fervid glances
 Our swords of day.*

Prophet

*Considerate
 lilia agri quo-
 modo crescunt.*

This garden I consider : if not the wise
 Repute it Paradise,
 The wise may err and ancient fame be lost ;
 As Ophir on the swart Arabian coast,—
 Whence she, of Saba queen,
 In silk raiment and gold,
 Bearing spices manifold,
 Not unlike this lily's purer sheen,
 Came a weary way to salute Solomon,
 Fainting to see, and fainted having seen
 Such wisdom dazzled from his throne,—
 Now Ophir lies unknown ;
 Yet stumbling haply on gold, a man shall say
 Who feeds his flocks by the well,

“Lo Ophir !” what if I to-day
A like token recover, and tell.

Chorus of Angels

*The fire of our heart presages
(And gins to dim,)
That though through ageless ages
We wait for him,
He comes ; our glory retires,
And shrinks from strife,
Folding in closer fires
The Tree of Life.*

Prophet

Goeth up a mist,
To water the ground from the four streams at even ;
Wrapt in a veil of amethyst
The trees and thickets wait for Spring to appear,
An angel out of heaven,
Bringing apparel new for the new year ;
In the soft light the birds
Reset to the loved air the eternal words,
And in the woods primroses peer.

Angel of the Spring

*He hath seen me with eyes of wonder
 And named my name,
 My shield is riven in sunder,
 And quencht my flame :
 My task is done, and rewarded,
 If faithfully ;
 By others now is guarded
 The mystic tree.*

II. SUMMER

Prophet

O tree of life, blessed tree,
 When shall I thy beauty attain to see ?
 New fledged ev'n now, new canopied with green,
 (Not darkening ever as these in brooding heat,)
 To beasts of the field a screen,
 A shadowy bower for weary eyes and feet :
 Tree by tree musing, I find not thee.

*Sinit
 parvulos, &c.*

See, in the rippling water the children at play,
 Flashing hither and thither, diamonded with spray ;
 Lithe and fair their limbs, their hearts light and
 gay—
 As fair as they of Niobe ;

Divinely fair, but too divinely famed ;
Not so now let it be.

Children of Adam these by birth proclaimed,
Clasping a mother's breast, a father's knee,
By father's father named.

Ay, but see, but see,
Their mien how high, how free their spirit !

They are naked and not ashamed
Of that translucent veil, that symmetry.
How they shout for glee !
It is the primal joy, and not the curse they inherit.
A child of Adam, a child of God can he be ?
O look, look and see !

The Angels of Children

His ear through nature's noises,
Where'er he trod,
Could hear in the children's voices
The praise of God.
Our task is done, and rewarded,
If faithfully,
By others now is guarded
The mystic tree.

III. AUTUMN

Prophet

Say who are ye upon this bank reclining,
 At random laid,
 Where loaded boughs a diaper intertwining
 Of fragrant shade,
 Stretch down their fruits to cheer the heart's re-
 pining.

*Dicit enim
Vetus melius
est.*

They hear me not, asleep, or drunken, or (ah!) dead.
 O Tree of Knowledge, 'tis thou, tree divine
 Of good and ill ;—trembling, I view thee.
 To me, as them, thy golden apples incline,
 Able to slake my thirst, or else undo me.
 Which shall I pluck, which dread
 Of all their goodlihead ?
 If roots be twain, from which there flows
 To these elixir, poison to those,
 How can I track their currents through the stem
 Which bears and buries them ?
 Nay, but it cannot be the tree of good ;
 'Tis utter evil ; to nearer view
 The fruit dislustres, dull of hue,
 All its ripe vermillion vanished,
 Dead fruit, not human food ;
 And these mistaking souls from life are banished.

But see,—a wonder,—lo, on each branch swells
A new fruit ruddy-rinded, that smells
Freshly, and from their places in decay
The old shrivel, and drop away.
The ripeness allures to taste, O what should stay
 me ?

Ill was the old, but the new is goodly and sweet ;
A blessing is in it, desire to greet,
Not a curse to slay me ;
(O divine the taste !)
Of the blind to open the eyes,
Deaf ears to unstop, make wise
The feeble-hearted, and to-day (O haste !)
For these poor dead the tree of life display !

Angel of the Tree of Divine Knowledge

*The old fruit which evil bringeth
 He hath eschewed ;
I breathe, and a new fruit springeth ;
 He saw it good.
My task is done ; and rewarded,
 If faithfully ;
By others now is guarded
 The mystic Tree.*

IV. WINTER

Prophet

I had thought ere this to have blest mine eyes
With thy vision benign, immortal tree ;
For since that fruit, more than with Euphrasy,
My spirits are all alert, my sense more keen.
Nor is the north that chides with the stript boughs

An enemy, if it shows
All these but mortal, though in Paradise.

But thou, O still unseen,
Come into sight ; not yet I faint, but abide
And ever abide, yearning thee to behold.
Thee following, this girdling forest wide,
My heart by hope made bold,
I have laboured through, and now emerge at length
Torn by the briars, spent my strength ;
But branches wintry-bare deny the sheen
Of the amaranthine leaves and fruit of gold.
Till now at last the light
Fails from my hope as from the heaven,
Where marshal the clouds, blown up with boisterous
breath ;
The trees strain from the blast of death
Shrieking convulsed, so fierce the hail is driven
Across the vault of night.

And now the waving brand
 Of a cherub lightens down
 And rends the air with crashing din ;
 Ah, if it be by God's command
 To show light in the darkness of nature's frown
 That I my purpose win !
 It flashes and still flashes, and now I see
 Beyond the blaze glooming a tree, a tree,
 Stately and large,—(O light deceive not,
 O weary eyes not now believe not !)—
 Unseen before ; to that I press,
 Despite the tempest and limbs' tardiness.
 Lighten, O sword divine, to clear my way,
 And thou, O happy heart, upstay
 Steps that falter and swerve, since few
 Remain ; come light again, I shall win through.

*Qui perdiderit
animam suam inveniet.*

Angel of Death

*My flame he hath not abhorred,
 Nor nature's strife,
 But lightened through my sword,
 Hath passed to Life.
 My task is done ; and rewarded,
 If faithfully ;
 Henceforth no more is guarded,
 The mystic tree.*

PRAYERS

GOD who created me
 Nimble and light of limb,
In three elements free,
 To run, to ride, to swim :
Not when the sense is dim,
 But now from the heart of joy,
I would remember Him :
 Take the thanks of a boy.

Jesu, King and Lord,
 Whose are my foes to fight,
Gird me with Thy sword,
 Swift and sharp and bright.
Thee would I serve if I might ;
 And conquer if I can,
From day-dawn till night,
 Take the strength of a man.

Spirit of Love and Truth,
 Breathing in grosser clay,
The light and flame of youth,
 Delight of men in the fray,
Wisdom in strength's decay ;
 From pain, strife, wrong to be free,
This best gift I pray,
 Take my spirit to Thee.

LINES ON A YOUNG FRIEND WHO DIED
JUST BEFORE TAKING ORDERS

Put off thy shoes from off thy feet :—

So came a voice to thee (tho' shod
With preparation, to make meet
For God) from God.

No vision nor similitude

He showed thee then, but, higher grace,
His Godhead's self, nor veil-endued,
But face to face.

Now not by word, O slow of speech,
Shalt thou the ills of life console,
Nor tongue to ear thy gospel preach,
But soul to soul.

A FUNERAL

THE snow is frozen hard upon the ground,
Hard frozen is the grief in every eye ;
The south will blow, and all these tears unbound
Shall find thy face together, by and by.

DURING THE ANTHEM

THE windows shake with the wind
 Of the organ-peal above ;
But angels there enshrined
 Keep their still look of love :
The boys below in the choir
 Sing plangent notes that drown
My heart in tears of fire,
 But leave unvexed their own.

No steadfast angel I ;
 No thoughtless innocent,
Through whom God's praise may cry
 Nor scorch the way it went ;
Child-haven left, my bark
 Rides a tumultuous sea,
That far, far port its mark,—
 The *saints'* serenity.

AMBITION

UNSUMMONED they arrive, and pass unchecked,
Tall, fair, and chaplet-decked ;
With wreaths of berried myrtle to allure,
Myrtle and bay with glistening dew fresh-varnished ;
But some bear gold, and some but lilies pure,
Some roses heavy-petalled, heavy-scented,
Or that sweet bud of May
Which lives its hour and falls contented ;
But who not knows, who knows so well as I
That but to touch is loss, their show a lie ;—
The flowers are shrivelled, and the gold is tarnished.

So well as I who knows ?
But who so well, O sole, O sovereign rose,
How life itself lives but to touch and take ;
For that the blood rejoices, the limbs ache,
The brain ferments, the throat is dry ;
It is the world, life, I ;
Though fate forbid, it must be mine, must, must !
'Tis mine ; a moment, and 'tis summer dust.

O heart of golden fire,
Self-coined in idle pulse of passionate desire,
Wilt thou desire inherit ?
Then nurse thy flames till they be white from red,
And let the ore be shed
Into the seething cauldron of thy spirit ;
And when the minute strikes, pour ; and behold
True steel, more potent than the finest gold.

THE PLOUGHED MEADOW

COWSLIP and daffodil
Spring here for whoso will
In the merry meadow
Where all the weeds are flowers ;
Kine will not eat them,
But all the sunny hours
Merry maidens pleat them,
Till night brings shadow.

Daffodils die away,
Cowslips, from light of day,
When the plows shear it,
And earth's heart is broken ;
Blood-poppy takes their place,
Sharp sorrow's token ;
Charlock, the land's disgrace,
Assays to cheer it.

Dare we then blame the plow,
'Cause darnel springs up now ?
Where lurked the charlock seeds,

When the meads were merry ?
What sower planted them ?
Say, who would bury
Seeds of them ? who wanted them,
Flowers that were only weeds ?

ENVOY

O daughter mine, O thou,
Thou art the meadow, now
All thy weeds are flowers.
But soon will dawn the hours
When *thy* heart must be broken,
When conscience shall shear thee,
And heart's blood be the token.
Then will shew the weeds
Springing apace, apace,
Darnel, the heart's disgrace,
And charlock, in pale pride,
Assaying to cheer thee.

But let one sow, sow wide
In the furrow, and take heed
The seed is the good seed —
It shall choke charlock and darnel,
For *that* seed is eternal.

KIBROTH-HATTAAVAH

Moses. Hot sun, dry sand, yet dew
Morning and night descends ;
Praise God who giveth you
His own Angels for friends,
Who thus your table dress
In wildest wilderness.

Israelite. O heavy toil to gather,
O tasteless, sapless bread,
Than such faint life far rather
In the Red Sea we were dead.
With manna day by day
Our soul is dried away.

Moses. Souls mine, brought forth with pain,
Nursed, carried at my breast,
Weep not, nor murmur again,
For surely at last comes rest—
At last, after this toil
A land of wine and oil.

Israelite. Not so, father, not so,
That land comes never nigher ;
We move but to and fro,
Following a cloud and fire
Blown by the winds in heaven,
Aimless, as sands are driven.

Moses. Nay, but can ye forget
How from the further coast
Ye passed, nor your feet were wet.
But Pharaoh and his host
Were whelmed by the wall of sea,
And you, children, were free ?

Israelite. Freedom is this ? then liever
Slavery in Egypt's vales,
Where flows the sevenfold river
Whose fish shine with bright scales,
Where grow fruits without number,
Green melons, green cucumber.

Moses. See from the darkened dawn
What clouds the Spirit brings ;
Hark, near and nearer drawn
The whirr of infinite wings !
Praise God, fall at His feet,
Who hath given you flesh to eat.

Israelite. Flesh, sweet flesh once more :

In the veins blood, joy at heart :
For a week, a month, as of yore
Bliss :
ah, too sweet thou art :
Dark falls, I bite the dust
Of the grave, the grave of lust.

CAIAPHAS

THE signal comes ; Azazel's goat is dead.
Dead too our sin, and—the atonement fit
Such as His people may to God All-dread
Present and live,—have paid their lives for it
A bullock and a ram ; that, type of sin ;
This, symbol of obedient hearts within.

And now I wash : O whiter than white snow,
Whiter than these white robes make Thou my
hands,

Use Thou as I the hyssop, for I go
Before Thy Face to do Thy dear commands.
I lift the veil, and thro' the awful dark
Scatter the blood towards the Holy Ark.

So it is done : For you, O people mine
Thus year by year doth your High-priest atone ;
Pouring the innocent blood of goats and kine,
Bending before the mercy-seat alone.
Lo, ye are clean ; O bruised, afflicted sore,
God hath forgiven you, go, and sin no more.

Ay, put away from you the accursed thing,
Schism and sedition ; give to all their dues :
Why make a Christ when Cæsar is your King,
Why kick against the pricks, O foolish Jews ?
Surely 'twere well that one mad man should die,
And not the whole people perish utterly.

ON A MADONNA AND CHILD OF BELLINI

YEARS pass and change ; mother and child remain :
Mother so proudly sad, so sadly wise,
With perfect face and wonderful calm eyes,
Full of a mute expectancy of pain :
Child of whose love the mother seems so fain,
Looking far off, as if in other skies
He saw the hill of crucifixion rise,
And knew the horror, and would not refrain.

Yet all that pain is over in very deed,
And only love shines from those eyes alway ;
Love to fulfil the world's enormous need,
Light to illuminate the devious way,
Still brighter as the centuries recede,
And more and more unto the perfect day.

DOUBT

O THAT we too, above this earthly jar
One clear command obeying, we too might
Our path preordinate direct aright,
Moving in music where the planets are ;
Or motionless like to a fixed star
Might wait and watch above this weary night
The far-off coming of the morning light,
His feet upon the eastern hills afar.

Alas, alas ! bewildered, desolate,
A horror of thick darkness wraps us round,
And some sit sadly down and weep and wait,
And some fall headlong in the gulf profound,
And some creep on by their own torches' blaze :—
O sun, shine forth, as in the ancient days.

UNDER THE CANOPY

YES, it is good for us that we are here ;
Scarlet, and blue, and purple in the sky,
The covering of the holy sanctuary,
By day obscured, at last by night shines clear.
Lo, yonder sinking sun is flaming there
In evening sacrifice to God most high,
And yonder moon is praying quietly,
And her one star holdeth his taper near.

Yes, good for us, albeit men may say
Could we climb higher past the paths of men,
Vague mists would shew for all that fine linen,
And all that purple and scarlet turn to grey.
It may be, yet for us they keep their hue,
And if thou climb beyond, there is still the blue.

KNOWLEDGE AFTER DEATH

SICCINE separat amara mors?

Is death so bitter? Can it shut us fast
Off from ourselves, that future from this past,
When time compels us through those narrow doors?
Must we supplanted by ourselves in the course,
Changelings, become as they who know at last
A river's secret, never having cast
One guess, or known one doubt, about its source?

Is it so bitter? Does not knowledge here
Forget her gradual growth, and how each day
Seals up the sum of each world-conscious soul?
So tho' our ghosts forget us, waste no tear;
We, being ourselves, would gladly be as they,
And we, being they, are still ourselves made whole.

CREATION

GOD said, and the light was, and the light said,
“Lo, I am God” ; and the light changed and died,
And grew a great tree which on every side
Thrust out and would have filled the earth, but
 stayed,

Finding itself not God ; and there was made
A little bird with a shrill voice that cried,
“ God, God, God, God,” till evening, when its pride
Breathed itself out at a man’s feet dismayed :

And Adam said, “ I, I am God,” and ate
And saw that he was naked, and for shame
He died like the poor bird ; and him did Seth
Hide underground with Abel, and then wait
Wondering if he were God, or if there came
One mightier who would not let slip God’s breath.

A SONG OF THE THREE KINGS

"And finding by the sudden waning of the brightest star that the Blessed Virgin was sick, they made haste to take all manner of healing herbs and depart to Nazareth. But when they found her already dead, they returned sorrowfully to their own country."—*History of the Three Kings.*

SHE is dead, ah, she is dead,
Silent is that gentle breath,
Still and low that golden head,
That sweet mouth is stopped in death.
Wherefore now we bring to her
Gold and frankincense and myrrh.

She is dead, yes, she is dead,
Never may we see again
Purest, holiest maidenhead,
Mother without spot or stain.
Mid the sleeping lilies fold
Myrrh and frankincense and gold.

Lo, we come from very far
With all simples that we have,
Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar,
Ah, we came too late to save.
Scatter we ere we go hence
Gold and myrrh and frankincense.

FROM THE ITALIAN OF GIOVANNI DELL'
ISOLA

"**T**HREE shall be no more sea," the prophet saith,
Beyond the dark and silent strait of death,
 Purple like wine, or blue as summer skies,
Or fleecy white beneath the Nereids' breath.

Methinks the aged seer in some strange wise
Was rapt into Love's inmost Paradise,
 And saw the Apocalypse of heaven afar,
Gazing in Love's unfathomable eyes ;

Eyes of fine fire that weeping cannot mar,
More clear and crystalline than any star.

O Love, in heaven what need of any sea ?
Thine eyes are deeper than the deep seas are.

Thy voice reverberates all the mystery
And music of all waters that can be :
 Voices like flutes blown soft in unison,
And thunders of tempestuous harmony.

O Love, what need have we of any sun
Or moon in thine own city, whereupon
The light shed from thy bright hair's aureole
Makes pale the lustrous candles round thy throne.

O Love, with hair aflame and shining stole,
Who rose with wing'd feet from the flash and roll
Of waters where yet all things were as one,
First of the Gods and Saviour of the soul ?

SEPARATION

Quis dabit mihi pennas sicut columbae, et volabo, et requiescam

LET us not strive, the world at least is wide ;
This way and that our different paths divide,
Perhaps to meet upon the further side.

We must not strive ; friends cannot change to foes ;
O yes, we love ; albeit winter snows
Cover the flowers, the flowers are there, God knows.

And yet I would it had been any one
Only not thou, O my companion,
My guide, mine own familiar friend, mine own !

TRANSLATIONS

THE SWALLOW SONG

*Sung by Greek boys from door to door when the first
swallow came over sea*

COME, come is the swallow,
With fair spring to follow.
She and the fair weather
Are come along together.
White is her breast,
And black all the rest.

Roll us a cake
Out of the door
From your rich store
For the swallow's sake,—
And wine in a flasket,
And cheese in a basket,
And wheat-bread and rye,
These the swallow will not put by.

Will you give us or shall we go
If you will, why rest you so ;

But and if you shall say us nay,
Then we will carry the door away,
Or the lintel above it, or easiest of all
Your wife within, for she is but small
Give us our need
And take God speed.
Open door to the swallow then,
For we are children and not old men.

FROM ALCMAN

MAIDENS with voices like honey for sweetness, that
breathe desire,
See I faint ; for no sea-bird I, as I would be, nor
tire
Over the foam-flowers flying with halcyons ever on
wing,
Keeping a careless heart, a sea-blue bird of the
Spring.

FROM SAPPHO

WHEN thou fallest in death, dead thou shalt lie, nor
shall thy memory
Henceforth ever again ever be heard then or in
days to be,
Since no flowers upon earth ever were thine, plucked
from Pieria's spring,
Unknown also 'mid hell's shadowy throng thou
shalt go wandering.

FROM CALLIMACHUS

O IF swift ships had never, had never sailed the
sea,
Poor child of Diocleides, we had not wept for thee ;
But now thy body is drifting on some unknown
abyss,
And this thy name and empty tomb is all of
Sopolis.

FROM MENANDER

HIM I call happiest, Parmeno,
Who having seen this solemn show,
The common sun, the clouds, the sea,
The stars and fire, not painfully,
Goes quickly back from whence he came.
For you would see them still the same
If you abode for two or three
Short years, or for a century ;
But grander sights you would not see.

FROM LEONIDAS

Now is the time to sail, for home
The twittering swallow now has come,
And Zephyr bloweth graciously.
Yea, and the meads are fair to see,
With spring-flowers, and the ocean still,
Where late the fierce waves worked their will
And the wild wind went winnowing.
Heave up the anchor. Shoreward fling
The hawser, pilot, and make sail
With canvas-spread for every gale.
'Tis I Priapus bid thee this,
O man, whose charge the harbour is,
So may'st thou sail to every sea,
And bring thy merchandise with thee.

FROM THEOCRITUS

HAVE a care of life, O man,
Seeing how small is all its span.
 In the season of fierce weather,
Put not out to sea,
Lest thou perish as did he,
 Ship and man together.
For he hasted without care
To bring home his Syrian ware,
Home to Thasos beautiful—
Cleonicus miserable !
When the Pleiades 'gan sink
 He put forth on stormy seas,
But never reached the further brink,
 Sinking with the Pleiades.

FROM MELEAGER

I.

I WILL twine the violet,
And with soft narcissus set
Laughing lilies, and with these
Myrtles and sweet crocuses,
Hyacinth that purple blows,
And the lover-loving rose.
These for garlands will I pour
On thy head, my Heliodore,
On thy locks of curling hair,
On thy tresses sweet with myrrh.

II.

O pour the wine, and as you pour,
Say *Heliodore, Heliodore,*
Ever and ever, o'er and o'er.

And bring a chaplet for my hair,
Yesterday's chaplet, sweet with myrrh,
To wear in memory of her.

Ah, look, the lover's rose distrest,
Is weeping now to see her rest
Otherwhere, not upon my breast.

III.

Tears, bitter tears, all I can give,
Tears to the depths to thee I pour,
To thee in Hades, Heliodore,
All of my love that there may live.

The tearfull'st tears I pour to thee,
Tears of libation, wept above
Thy tomb in memory of my love,
In memory of thy love to me.

Ah, with what sighs, with what tears shed,
I, Meleager, mourn thy face,
To Acheron a bootless grace,
To me still dear among the dead.

Alas, my blossom, whither must
I seek thee now? Hades it is,
Hades hath snatched away my bliss,
And trod the perfect flower to dust.

Yet shall not tears disturb thy rest ;
Rather, I pray thee, mother earth,
Our mother thou, who gav'st us birth,
To fold her gently to thy breast.

IV.

Bridegroom none but death alone
Has my Clearista won,
So to loose her virgin zone.

Yester eve the flutes blew sweet,
Bridegroom and the bride to greet,
And the bridal doors were beat.

Now at dawn they sound again,
But another sadder strain,
Hymen's song is hushed in pain ;

And the torch that flared so gay,
Lighting up her bride's array,
Lit the dead her downward way.

V.

Now white violets blow, and blows
The narcissus in the showers
And the mountain-wandering

Lily, and at last the rose,
Loving lovers, even she,
Peitho's child, Zenophile,
Flower of spring and flower of flowers,
Buddeth, sweetly blossoming.
Meadows, tho' your flowers are bright,
Tho' you laugh, your laugh is light,
For the maid is rarer far
Than your sweetest garlands are.

VI.

Love I cry, the truant love.
Now, but now at break of day
Did he from his couch remove,
Spread his wings and fly away.

Ever-prattling is the child,
Sweetly tearful, laughing-sly,
Quiver-girt, of spirit wild,
Swift of foot and swift to fly.

Who his father none can tell,
Heaven and earth profess to me
They are not responsible
For this brave ; so says the sea.

All men hate him everywhere.

Look you well in every part,
Lest unseen he lay a snare,
Gentle hearer, for your heart.

Ah, the archer ! there he lies,
Hid beneath my mistress' brow,
In the shadow of her eyes,
Darting at me even now.

VII.

He shall be sold, even on his mother's breast
As he lies ; yes, sold ; why should I rear him, pray ?
A snub-nosed, impudent rascal at the best.
"Has wings and dimples," you say !

He can scratch, I know, and blubber, the shameless
chit ;
And his tongue is never still, nor his eyes : nay,
nay,

He is fierce to his own mother ; depend on it,
A wild thing, every way.

So sell him ; an out-bound merchant who wants to
buy

A boy may take him and welcome ; O I say,
He's crying ; dear, dear ! well, I won't ; don't cry,
'Shall stay with mamma, 'shall stay.

VIII.

"The die is cast ! a torch ! I will abroad !
Coragio."—"Sayst thou, drunkard, what's thy
mind ?"—
"To revel."—"Revel ? have thy wits resigned ?"
"What's wit to love ? Thy torch and quickly ! the
road !"—
"And your philosophy, where lies its use ?"—
"Ah, great the toil to win, what now I lose ?"
Know then that Love sways even wisest Zeus."

IX.

The windy winter from the sky is gone,
The purple spring-time brings the flowers with
glee,
The wan earth puts her grassy garland on,
And fresh leaves deck each quick'ning plant and
tree.
Fed by soft dew-drops of the genial dawn,
With opening roses all the meadows smile,
Clear pipes the shepherd on the mountain-lawn,
And grey-haired kids the goat-herd's heart beguile.
Now o'er the sea's broad back the sailors fare,
Unwearied Zephyr fills the swelling sail ;
Now, wreaths of clustering ivy in their hair,
To the grape-giver Bacchants shout all hail ;

New-born from out the teeming heifer's womb
The hived bees their curious labour ply,
And in the fretted hollows of the comb
The white fresh-flowing honey-drops lay by.
Now every tribe of birds sings clear and shrill,
The twitt'ring household swallow in the dale,
The halcyon and the swan on wave and rill,
And shadow'd in the grove the nightingale.
If then the forest boughs and leaves rejoice,
If earth has burgeon'd and the shepherd sings,
And fleecy flocks make merry with one voice,
And sailors go on their sea-wanderings,
When Dionysus leads his jocund quire,
And winged songsters tune their various lay,
And bees go labouring on and never tire,
Why should the singer only not be gay ?

FROM SOPHOCLES

My fortune circles ever in the pace
Of God's revolving wheel,
And all its nature changes with its place.

Like as for no two nights the moon's wan face
Can keep the same form still ;
But first from out the unseen to birth is brought
Then grows in grace and night by night
enspheres,
Till when the fulness of her prime appears,
She dwindles back and comes again to nought.

FROM THE ILIAD

The Greek and Trojan armies join battle

As when sea-waves upon a sounding shore
Rise wave on wave, the west wind blows them up,
First out at sea a crest, and at the end
A breaker loudly bellowing on the beach,
And round the capes a crescent mounting high
Spitting sea-froth ; so ever wave on wave
The Danaan army moved along to war.
Each chief called to his men ; and they moved on,
A great crowd following dumbly. You would say
In all their hearts there was no human voice.
Silent they watched the signals, and on all
Shone dazzling armour, as they moved in rank.

But as when sheep stand in some rich man's fold
Ten thousand, and white milk is drawn from them,
They bleat the while, hearing the bleating lambs,
So of the Trojans thro' the broad array
A tumult rose, for not to all alike
Was one same speech or voice, but mixed their
tongue

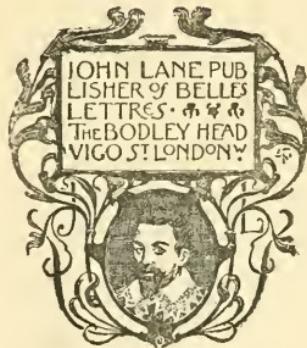
Summoned from many lands ; these Ares roused,
Grey-eyed Athene those, and Dread and Fear
And Discord sister of Ares, slayer of men,
Restless and eager, ever by his side.
Small is her stature first, but at the end
Her feet move on the earth, her head strikes heaven.
She moved then down the midst, and thro' the host
Cast mutual hate, and increase of men's groans.

So when they came together to one place,
Shield clashed on shield, and spears and strength
of men

In brazen armour clanged, and bossy shields
Closed on each other, and there rose a roar,
And with it cries and prayers of those who slew
And those they slew, and the earth ran with blood.
And as when winter torrents down the hills
Rush from their mighty founts where two glens
meet,
And the strong streams meet in the deep ravine,
And shepherds hear the thunder on the hills,
Such was the roar and stress of meeting men.

❧ Of the poems in this volume, a few appeared in *Love in Idleness* (Kegan Paul & Co.); a few others in *Love's Looking Glass* (Rivington, Percival & Co.); and one, No. xvi. of those called "In a Garden," in the *National Observer*: these last are here reprinted by the courtesy of the publishers.

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